

Title and Code of Course: ERPB-BPS2608: Sigmund Freud Debates C. S. Lewis: Sexuality, Suffering, and the Meaning of Life

Venue and Time of Course:

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Credit Point Value: 6	Number of Lessons per Week: 2	Type of Course: Lecture / <u>Seminar</u>	Method of Evaluation: Oral Examination / In- Class Presentation
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Course Description:

Arguably the most influential individual in the history of psychology, Freud's concepts such as ego, repression, resistance, and Freudian slips have become part of our vernacular, and the sexual revolution he helped spawn, a pervasive feature of modern life. Freud's atheism, like his focus on sexuality, is well known. One might think his life would have little commonality with that of C. S. Lewis, the Oxford professor who wrote not only the Chronicles of Narnia but also some of the 20th century's most widely read books arguing for belief. However, Sigismund Schlomo Freud and Clive Staples Lewis shared much more than distinctive given names. Delving into their biographies, one sees that they faced many of the same struggles. Both experienced losses in their childhood: Freud lost his beloved nanny, Lewis, his mother when he was 9. Later in life, Freud battled cancer of the mouth and Lewis agonized through the illness and death of his wife, Joy. Through such challenges, Sigmund Freud and C.S. Lewis developed their perspectives on some of life's deepest questions.

While Freud and Lewis shared a number of similar life experiences, the positions they developed represent polar opposites. This class will focus on Freud and Lewis' thoughts about sexuality and love, pain and suffering, and, most importantly, ultimate questions of human significance, such as the meaning of life and the existence of God. We will also be examining their biographies, trying to discern the commentary their own lives offer on the viability and utility of their views. Although they never met, juxtaposing their writings and life stories permit their diametrically opposed positions to stand out in bold relief for evaluation like two debaters on a stage. Participants in this seminar will enter into this debate, and in the process we will refine our own answers to some of life's ultimate questions.

Bibliography:

1. Armand Nicholi. *The Question of God: C. S. Lewis and Sigmund Freud Debate God, Love, Sex, and the Meaning of Life*. New York: The Free Press, 2002.
2. Sigmund Freud. *The Future of an Illusion*. New York: Vintage Books, 1939.
3. C. S. Lewis. *A Grief Observed*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001.